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JULIAN H. STEWARD, *Editor*

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THE TROPICAL FOREST TRIBES

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[Title Page]

1:Lipkind E-5 (1937) 1948 SP9 Caraja SP9

THE CARAJÁ[1]

By WILLIAM LIPKIND

TRIBAL DIVISIONS AND TERRITORY

The *Carajá* are a river people who since pre-Columbian times have held as the central portion of their territory the inland Island of Bananal, which is formed by the great fork of the Araguaya River (lat. 8°–17° S., long. 48°–52° W., map 1, *No. 1*; see Volume 1, map 7). They must be regarded as an independent linguistic family for the present; their language displays no convincing similarities to any other recorded South American language.

The term *"Carajá"* is used to designate the entire people as well as the largest of the three tribal divisions; the other two are the *Shambioá* and the *Javahé*. The *Carajá* proper have 20 villages on the western or main branch of the Araguaya River, widely spread from Leopoldina south of Bananal clear down to the end of the Island. The *Shambioá*, now nearly extinct, have only two villages left, a little way below Conceição. The eight villages of the *Javahé* lie on the eastern or minor branch of the Araguaya River and on the small streams within Bananal. The general location and the relative sizes of the three groups have remained the same since the earliest times.

The native names give some notion of intergroup attitudes. All three groups regard themselves as a single people and use a name meaning "we" to distinguish themselves from other tribes. The *Carajá* proper are called the "great people" by the other two groups. The *Shambioá* are the "companion people." The *Javahé* are called by a name which is used generally to mean "Indian" and bears the pejorative connotation "backwoodsman" or "hick." There is a possible analysis which makes it the "old people" but, even if this etymology is correct, the word no longer has that meaning.

Dialectical differences are slight and other differences not very great, with the *Shambioá* occupying a middle position culturally between the other two groups. This account is based on field work with the *Carajá* proper and refers to the other groups only where they exhibit important differences.

[1] The present description of the *Carajá* is based on the author's field work during 1937, done under the auspices of the Department of Anthropology, Columbia University.

1:Lipkind E-5 (1937) 1948 SP9 Caraja SP9

ARCHEOLOGY

Large circular hollows in the ground are found at various points in *Carajá* territory, always in the close vicinity of a stream. By tradition these are ancient cemeteries; of old, they say, people did not mourn at a funeral but held a feast in the hollow. One of these hollows located on the height above the river bank at Fontoura is 18 m. (about 58 ft.) long, 15 m. (about 50 ft.) wide, and 1½ m. (5 ft.) deep at its center. The mound forming the northern side was excavated, disclosing two lines of burials with associated pottery, bone labrets, and beads.

The pottery is very similar to modern *Carajá* pottery and the labrets are exactly like those now in the possession of the *Carajá*. The cemetery cannot, however, definitely be identified as *Carajá*. The present-day *Carajá* cemetery is different in location and ground plan. There is now secondary urn burial, and in the first burial the bodies are laid at right angles to the river rather than parallel as were those disclosed by the excavation. Still, the remains show even less resemblance to the *Ge* and *Tupí* peoples in the neighborhood. The question must be left open for further archeological study.

HISTORY

Since the earliest times, the *Carajá* have been at war with their *Ge* and *Tupí* neighbors. The sole exception is the *Tapirapé*, with whom at one time the *Javahé* maintained close and friendly relations. The *Shambioá* were the first to come in contact with the Neo-Brazilians early in the 17th century. Contact with the *Carajá* proper must have begun shortly after the founding of Santa Anna by Bartholomeu Bueno in 1682. The *Carajá* are on good terms with the Neo-Brazilians, trading skins and fish for clothing, beads, knives, axes, guns, sugar, and salt.

Population.—According to the census made by the author in 1939, the *Carajá* number 1,510, divided as follows: *Carajá* proper, 795; *Javahé*, 650; *Shambioá*, 65. These figures should be contrasted with Castelnau's (1850–59) count in 1845 of 2,000 *Shambioá* in four villages, and his estimate of a total of 100,000 *Carajá*, and with Krause's (1911) estimate of 10,000 *Carajá* in 1908.

CULTURE

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

Farming.—Clearings are made in the thick forest along the watercourses. Gardens must be so located as to be accessible by canoe in the dry season and yet not flooded in the rainy season. The scarcity of such land results in some of the plots being several miles distant from the village. Proximity to fishing grounds is generally held to be more important. The work of clearing is begun in May at the beginning of the dry season. Maize

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is planted in September, when the first rains come, and manioc shortly after. There is little cultivation beyond weeding. The basic crop is manioc, both the sweet and bitter varieties being cultivated, with maize next in importance. Four varieties each of sweet and bitter manioc and 10 varieties of maize are cultivated. Other crops are: Five varieties of potatoes, two varieties of cara, four varieties of watermelon, three varieties of squash, four varieties of beans, and ten varieties of bananas, as well as peanuts, urucú, tobacco, cotton, calabashes, sugarcane, yams, peppers, pineapples, and papayas. Men do all the work with a little assistance in harvesting and weeding from older women. The *Javahé* are more industrious farmers than the other *Carajá*, cultivating extensive plantations.

Collecting.—A large number of vegetable products are gathered for use as food, medicine, and raw material for manufacture, but only a few are of great importance. The babassu and the buriti palms, used for food and textile materials, are among the most valuable. The taquara reed is sought after for arrows. Turtle eggs are a significant item of food during the dry season. Honey is indispensable for feasting.

Hunting.—Although the *Carajá* are passionate hunters, very few of the animals available in the region are eaten. Only the peccary is really sought and constitutes a sizable item in the larder. The other animals that are eaten—the cutia, coati, woodsdeer, monkey, iguana, and a few birds, such as the mutum, jao, and jacu—are killed when encountered but are not eaten by everyone. Peccaries are hunted in a communal drive, the most favorable time being shortly after the beginning of the rainy season when large droves are trapped on islands.

The chief purpose of hunting is to get feathers, and the most desirable birds are the various parrots, herons, the male stork, and the flamingo. The nesting of valuable birds is carefully watched, and the young are stolen and tamed. Feathers stored in small baskets almost constitute a currency, because they are readily negotiable at all times and maintain a stable value.

The principal weapons are the bow and club. The bow, made of a variety of woods but with a preference for juari when available, is round in cross section and about 6 feet (2 m.) long. The arrow is preferably of taquara reed and variously tipped with wood, animal bone, or fish bone. Clubs are beautifully fashioned of heavy hardwood, decorated with delicate carving, and are swung and thrown with equal skill. The lance is now used only for ceremonial purposes.

Fishing.—Fish is the most important food supply. Trapping and drugging fish with timbo is a communal affair; individuals fish with the bow and arrow. There is occasional night fishing, with spearing by torchlight. The pirarucu is killed by harpoon. The hook and line is little used, and apparently was borrowed recently from the Neo-Brazilians.

Food preparation.—Manioc is peeled, grated, squeezed out by hand, and cooked into a soup. When the soup cools, it is masticated for a few

1:Lipkind E-5 (1937) 1948 SP9 Caraja SP9

252 minutes, then allowed to stand for a while. The resulting fermentation is not allowed to continue long enough to produce an intoxicating drink. 262 This soup, along with a similar soup made of maize, is a daily staple. 252 Manioc and ground maize are also made into cakes, but this is a holiday variation of diet rather than the staff of life as in other regions. The standard methods of cooking meat, fish, and vegetables are boiling, roasting on a spit, roasting on a grate, and roasting in the embers. Occasionally, some vegetables are baked in hot sand. [251] Maize is the only food that is stored. On platform shelves at the top of their rainy-season houses, the *Jcvahé* pile a supply of maize dried on the cob sufficient to last throughout the dry season.

HOUSES AND VILLAGES

361 The permanent or rainy-season village is erected on a high bank overlooking the river. One or two rows of houses face the river, and the men's [535] house, about 50 feet (15.2 m.) back, faces down river. All the space between the men's house and the family houses is kept perfectly clean and constitutes the dancing plaza of the village. The surrounding clearing extends only a few yards in all directions. All neighboring forest which must be traversed in hunting or gathering is threaded by well-marked [487] trails. A path leads down from the center of the village to the main port where women, married men, and children bathe, and married men land their canoes. Another path cuts diagonally down from the men's house to the bachelor's port where the young men bathe and visitors to the masked dances land their canoes.

342 The house is rectangular in ground plan with supported horizontal ridge poles (fig. 18). Saplings are sunk into the ground at the sides and

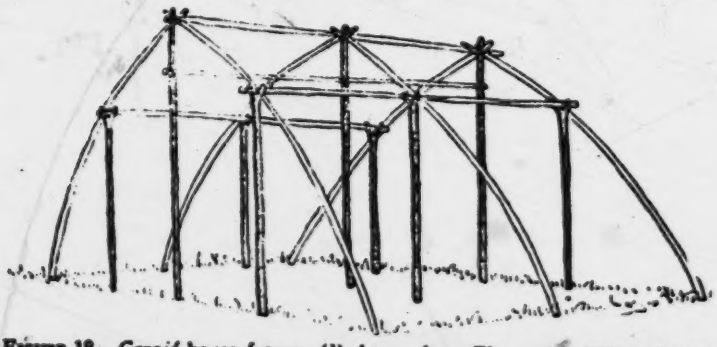

FIGURE 18.—*Carajá* house frame. (Redrawn from Ehrenreich, 1891 b, fig. 3.)

bent over to the ridge pole at the top, where they are firmly tied with bast. Then the whole structure is tightly thatched with successive overlapping layers of palm frond tied to the saplings (pl. 20, *top*). The entrance is a small rectangular opening at the bottom, through which one crawls after

1:Lipkind E-5 (1937) 1948 SP9 Caraja SP9

pushing aside a door of plaited palm. Every married woman in the family cooks at her own fireplace, which consists of two lumps of hardened clay. Mats used for sleeping and sitting are spread over the entire floor. Wooden stools (fig. 19) may also be found. Bows, arrows, and rattles

FIGURE 19.—*Carajá* wooden stool. (Redrawn from Ehrenreich, 1891 b, fig. 13.)

are shoved into the wall thatch. Baskets, used for storing such things as tobacco, urucú, and feathers, are hung by a string from the ridge poles. Large baskets containing vegetables lie on the ground next to the thatch.

The dry-season house is identical in form but smaller and of flimsier construction. Thatching is looser and the walls are thatched only about halfway to the ground, the north and west sides often being left completely open. The dry-season village is generally constructed on a long beach and, as the site grows dirty, is moved along the beach. The ground plan of the dry-season village is identical with the rainy-season village.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

The most prominent facial decoration is a blue-black circular scarification about an inch in diameter over each cheekbone. The ears of infants are pierced and an ornament consisting of a small polished capybara tooth with a feather attached is inserted. A common ear ornament for children is a mother-of-pearl disk with a cut feather fringe set on a blackened thin rod. In a perforation of their lower lips, men wear wood or bone labrets of a variety of shapes (pl. 21; fig. 21, *a*), each assigned to a different age grade; old men use simple wooden plugs.

Men wear their hair long, winding it round a plaited cotton rope reddened with urucú. Women wear their hair about shoulder length.

Armlets crocheted of cotton are worn at the wrists and just above the elbow; similar ornaments are worn just below the knee and at the ankle. These are worn particularly by children and are supposed to aid growth.

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Young men wear large armlets almost 12 inches (30 cm.) long crocheted of cotton with hanging fringes.

Women wear a bark-cloth girdle, which is wound round the body and under the crotch and looped over, hanging down in front. Feather headdresses of a number of different designs are worn by men on festal occasions. Men tie the prepuce with a firmly wound string and wear a string belt.

Elaborately decorated woven belts with hanging ema feathers are worn for wrestling matches. Bird down is glued on the shoulders, arms, and legs. Body painting is very elaborate, and designs covering the entire body are carefully executed with genipa. Urucú is spread generally, with accents on the cheekbones, the nose, and the upper arm.

TRANSPORTATION

The *Carajá* manufacture elongated dugouts, neatly adapted to landing and freeing their craft among the sandbanks.

MANUFACTURES

Bark cloth.—Bark cloth is made of *Apeiba* bast, soaked, beaten with flat stones, and dried until it becomes very soft and white.

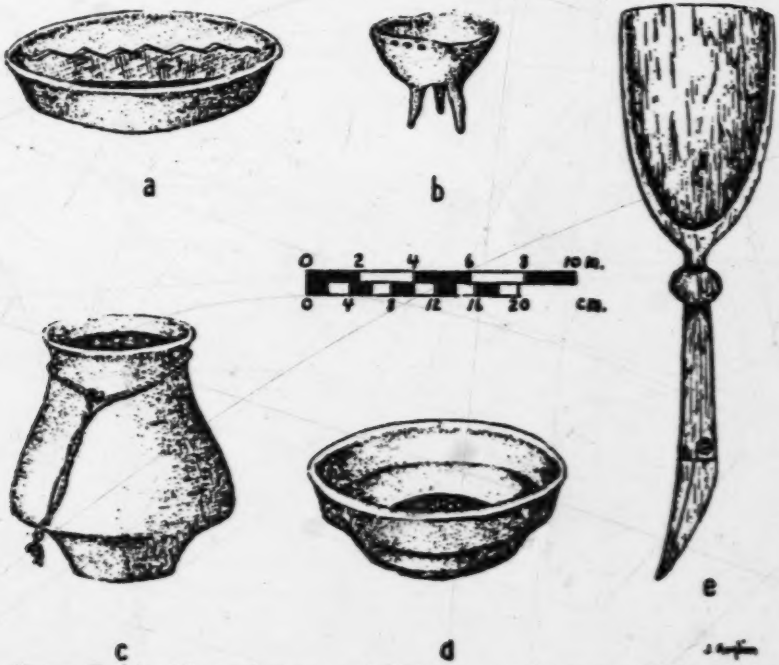

FIGURE 20.—*Carajá* manufactures. *a-d*, Pottery; *e*, wooden scoop. (Redrawn from Ehrenreich, 1891 b, figs. 5 and 14.)

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Basketry.—The *Carajá* excel in the variety and solidity of their plaitwork, which includes burden baskets, strainers, shoulder bags, bottles, elliptical feather cases, and boat-shaped containers for suspension. Twilling and twining are the dominant techniques (pl. 22).

Textiles.—The *Carajá* produce some taffetalike fabrics, but in 1775 Pinto da Fonseca found them using cotton solely for fish nets and bowstrings, so that he himself introduced a loom and taught the women how to work it.

Featherwork.—In contrast to their *Ge* neighbors of Eastern Brazil, the *Carajá* are outstanding for featherwork. They make wide-meshed and close-meshed caps with feathers tied to the intersection of the interlaced splints and arranged into rosettes, diadems of feathers stuck into radially mounted cane tubes, and other types of ornaments (pl. 21).

Axes.—Stone axes figure in old *Carajá* petroglyphs and have been found by many travelers in the area. They were used for adzing, chopping, and warfare, and as chief's badges. Iron axes have rapidly replaced them.

FIG. 21.—*Carajá* manufactures. *a*, Labrets; *b*, comb; *c*, pipe. (Approximately ½ actual size.) (Redrawn from Ehrenreich, 1891 b, figs. 2, 9, and 4.)

1:Lipkind E-5 (1937) 1948 SP9 Caraja SP9

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PLATE 20.—Caraja house and physical types. *Top:* House. (Courtesy University Museum, Philadelphia.) *Bottom, left:* Warriors. *Bottom, right:* Girls. (After Ehrenreich, 1891 b.)

[Facing P.186]

1:Lipkind E-5 (1937) 1948 SP9 Caraja SP9

411 [773] [774] **Weapons.**—The *Carajá* use bows and arrows (pls. 20, *bottom, left;* 21, *left* and *center*), and their mythology indicates aboriginal use of the spear thrower for hunting monkeys. Recently, they have used a spear thrower of the upper Xingú River type for sport.

323 **Pottery.**—Pottery vessels include several forms of plain ware (fig. 20).

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

611 [428] The kinship structure may be described as double descent. Both lines are important, the greater emphasis falling on the mother's line, and both lines serve different functions. Village citizenship, adoption, and the closest affectional ties are reckoned in the mother's line. Moiety membership and the offices of chief, priest, and food-divider are patrilineally inherited.

621 622 [562] [177] The fundamental unit of social organization is the village. Every village has one or more ioló, children of chiefly line, designated by the chief for preferential treatment by the members of the village. The chief names the ioló who is to succeed him or, if he fails to do so, the village makes the choice at his death. Girls of chiefly line are similarly chosen for preferential treatment; each of them is known as the "hidden woman." There is some indication that women functioned as chiefs in former times, but today there is no woman chief. The chief has no coercive powers but directs the village by recognizing the will of the majority in such matters as the selection of camp and garden sites and the announcement of a move at change of season. His principal function is to act as peacemaker, and people readily submit to his adjudication. Because of the importance of religious ceremonials, the priest and the shaman frequently exercise more authority than the chief. When all three offices are vested in a single individual, his authority may be considerable, but it is kept in check by the right of a discontented person to move at any time to another village.

[756] [793] [622]

59 [591] [592] Within the village the important unit is the household. Residence being matrilocal, a household consists of sisters, their husbands, children, and the husbands of grown daughters. Marriage is restricted to one's own generation, the preferred mate being a cousin on the mother's side.

[582] [626] There is no sanction but ridicule against wrong marriages, and there are many cases of cross-generational marriage. Marriage is predominantly monogamous, but a few instances of polygyny and one of polyandry were encountered. The avunculate is very important and involves many social and especially ceremonial duties. Cooperation in the household is close and in the village fairly close. In addition, villages are grouped together in ceremonial units, generally consisting of three or four neighboring villages, which celebrate important feasts jointly. This ceremonial unit acts as an insurance group when a village's crop fails or its fish supplies grow scarce. Beyond this, the only intervillage ties

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1:Lipkind E-5 (1937) 1948 SP9 Caraja SP9

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628 are the product of intermarriage and formal friendship. Intervillage
626 feuds are common and are restrained only by the religious community, sanctuary being granted at all religious ceremonials.

ETIQUETTE

576 All dealings with visitors are conducted according to elaborate formal
195 patterns. The language is rich in formal appellations, exclamations, and
562 honorific phrases. The most remarkable feature is that women are permitted to behave with perfect freedom, whereas men, until they become fathers, behave with a shy and deferential modesty resembling but exceeding that of the Victorian maiden. Normal relations between members
[52] of the same village are formal and dignified; only in the men's house or on fishing and hunting trips is the behavior of men relaxed enough to permit horseplay and casual joking.

LIFE CYCLE

553 **Childbirth and Childhood.**—The child gets two sets of names, one
551 male and one female, as soon as the mother is known to be pregnant. These
843 are one's own names given by grandparents of both lines. Taboos in
846 regard to diet and behavior are required of both parents before and after birth. There is a well-developed couvade based on the notion of an
853 intimate connection between the infant and its father. Babies are nursed
862 until they turn to other food of their own volition; sometimes ridicule is used as a sanction against particularly recalcitrant children. No inter-
854 course is allowed during the period of lactation. Babies are carried on the hip, and sleep with the mother until weaning, when they are paired
[29] off with other children or with a grandparent. The girl child wears no clothing until weaned and then receives a fringed belt.

881 **Puberty and Initiations.**—At menstruation, a girl's cheeks are scarified and she assumes the girdle.

[304] A boy passes through a first initiation at about the age of 8 or 9,
[302] when his lower lip is pierced and a small bone labret inserted. A couple of years later, he passes through a second initiation, when his hair is cut short to a tonsure, his entire body is stained black with genipa, and he assumes the penis cord. When his hair has grown out to shoulder length, it is put up in a braid, and he attains full status as a young man.

885 The next change of status for both boys and girls occurs at marriage, when, for the first time, they take on the responsibilities of regular work.
551 Teknonymy is a matter of pride and follows the birth of the first child. The name is retained permanently thereafter, even though the child should
888 die. At about 45 both parents discard their ornaments and accept the
561 status of old age. All the above age grades are named and involve differential behavior and dietary observances.

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Death.—At death, the soul becomes a wild ghost if the person has been violently killed and a regular resident of the village of the dead if he has suffered a quiet death. A shaman's soul is translated to the skies. Mourning puts an end to all religious ceremonies and is celebrated by self-laceration, the destruction of property, and daily keening. There is separate burial in formal cemeteries for those who died quietly and those who died violently. The corpse is wrapped in a mat with his weapons and ornaments, and the mat is hung in a shallow grave covered by poles (fig. 22). Food and drink are provided for a short period. After the next change of season, the bones are exhumed and placed in a family urn.

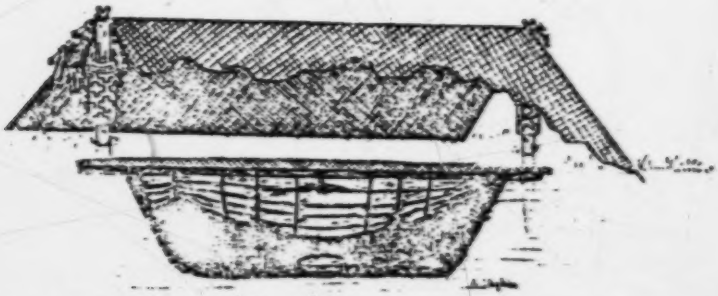

FIGURE 22.—*Carajá* burial. (Redrawn from Ehrenreich, 1891 b, fig. 16)

WARFARE

The *Carajá* are good fighters and have maintained themselves since prehistoric times in a territory surrounded on all sides by warlike enemies. Their usual tactics are waiting outside an enemy village at night and attacking at dawn. In defense, they run to the nearest water, where they are unbeatable. They use the bow and arrow and club, and are skilled wrestlers. They cut off a foot bone of a dead enemy and carry it back to their village; this places them in control of the ghost, who now becomes a caretaker of the village and is impersonated in a special dry-season ceremony. At one such ceremony there were two *Tapirapé* ghosts, three *Chavante*, one *Cayapó*, and one Neo-Brazilian. Present-day warfare is largely with the *Chavante*, the *Cayapó*, and the *Canoeiro*. Now and then a Neo-Brazilian may be killed by stealth to avenge a personal grievance. No captives are taken except women and small children, who are treated as full members of the group.

ESTHETIC AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Art.—Decorative art is confined to woven designs on baskets and mats, feather ornaments, elaborate masks with superimposed feather designs,

1:Lipkind E-5 (1937) 1948 SP9 Caraja SP9

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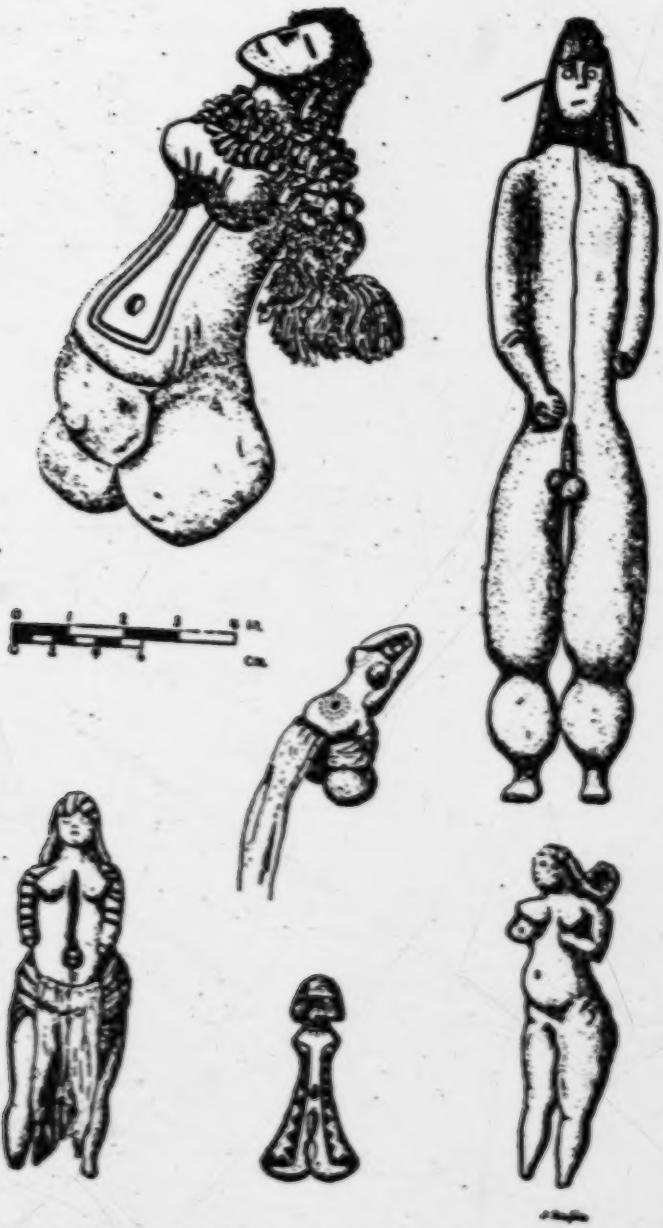

FIGURE 23.—*Carajá* wax and clay dolls. (Redrawn from Ehrenreich, 1891 b, pl. 12.)

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small clay dolls (fig. 23), delicately carved clubs, body paint designs, and a little painting and incising of pottery.

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FIGURE 24.—*Carajá* masks. (Redrawn from Ehrenreich, 1891 b, figs. 18, 22.)

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Music and dances.—The major art of the *Carajá* is music. A large number of elaborate dances with complex songs, each dance having a separate song style, make up the chief body of the music. These are all religious. In addition, there are some secular dances, and songs are interspersed in the tales. Musical instruments are very few, there being only a rattle accompanying the singers and a small flute which is used as a toy.

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Games.—Of numerous games, the most important is a formal wrestling match which is an indispensable part of most religious ceremonies and of all intervillage visits.

Narcotics and stimulants.—Like the other tribes in this region, the *Carajá* have no alcoholic beverages. They smoke tobacco in short cylindrical pipes (fig. 21, *c*). They are heavy smokers, some of the children beginning before they are weaned.

SUPERNATURALISM

Cults.—*Carajá* religion consists of two distinct cults: a cult of the dead and a mask cult (fig. 24). The cult of the dead, which is under the direction of the priest, has for its object the placation of ghosts by a periodical ceremonial which comes to its climax in several large calendrical feasts. The most important of these feasts is the Big House Feast, which is celebrated shortly after the beginning of the rainy season. All the villages which comprise a ceremonial unit come to the one village where the feast is conducted. There is a great mass of ceremonial addressed to various classes of ghosts, but the central portion of the ceremony is the impersonation of animal ghosts. Another important feast, already mentioned, occurs at the height of the dry season and is directed toward the control of enemy ghosts. Two other feasts held in the dry season are chiefly for the entertainment of the ancestors.

The mask cult is concerned with the worship of another class of supernaturals. It consists of an elaborate routine of feasts, interrupted only by death. In these feasts, conducted by the shaman, the supernaturals are impersonated in the complex dances mentioned above.

The two cults are independent of each other and are both strictly men's cults. Any women intruding upon the secrets of the cults is subjected to gang rape and remains a wanton thereafter.

Shamanism.—A shaman is trained by apprenticeship to an older shaman. A certain amount of medical lore is taught but the essence of the training is learning how to communicate with supernaturals in a state of trance.

There is a considerable amount of sorcery. The main technique is bottling a supernatural being into a small image and then directing it into the body of the victim. As almost all deaths are interpreted as the result of sorcery, feuding is continual.

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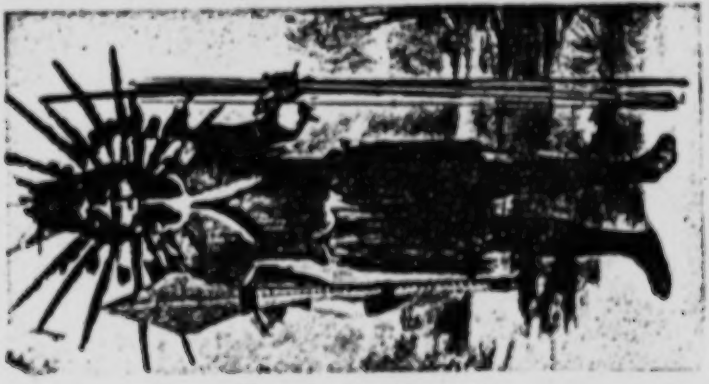

PLATE 21.—Caraja types. (Courtesy University Museum, Philadelphia.)

[End Plate 1]

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PLATE 22.—Carajá paddles, gourds, and basketry. (After Ehrenreich, 1891 b.)

[End Plate 2]